

Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." ²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

Matthew 26:26-29 "Hour of Communion" Maundy Thursday in series, "The Solemn Hours of Lent"

Introduction: Hours spent with family are precious hours, often they are hours we jealously guard because children and grandchildren grow up quickly and then they are off making their way in life, raising their own families and often they are in far away places. When Jesus time with his family of disciples was growing short he also wanted to spend time with them.

They were the men whom he had taught, and as Jesus said, they had stood by him in his trials. Surely there were hardly enough hours to spend with them for he had so much to teach them and they had so much to learn. So the final hours that Jesus spent with him before his death were precious indeed, for he not only taught them, but he gave them a precious gift, an enduring gift, one that he gave them to pass on to the entire church for all time.

His time with them began at the Passover meal. It would be the last Passover he would celebrate with them. In fact, this Passover would mark a turning point in the history of the church. After this meal, the Passover would no longer need to be celebrated. In its place Jesus would leave his disciples and the church his last will and testament. In the hour of communion he would leave us a testament that declares the real presence, one that declares the purpose of the sacrament and one that declares the personal nature of the sacrament.

I. That declares the Real Presence

A. Real, because Jesus says IS

1. When someone leaves his last will and testament, he does so with every intention of having his will and desires carried out. So surely he would want to be clear, use unmistakable language so that his property will be distributed according to his wishes.

2. So for example, if a man were leaving his property and possessions to his family, he might write in his will, “To my daughter Jill, I leave a trust in the amount of so and so much money; To my son Jason I leave my house located at such and such an address. The language is clear and unmistakable.

3. So Jesus also, wanting to leave us a most precious gift before he died, gave us a gift we could possess based on his clear language. Take eat, THIS IS MY BODY. His words are simple and straight forward. There is no mystery in them, no hidden meaning and there is no mystery to the truth here. Jesus gives us his body along with the bread.

4. There is mystery in how we explain this truth, but only in the sense that the sacrament is a miracle that we cannot explain except to say that Jesus gives us his body and blood in a miraculous way. Just as we cannot explain Jesus’ other miracles of healing people, or feeding thousands with just a few loaves and a couple fish, or how he stilled storms. And God’s people have always accepted those miracles without explanation, So we can accept this miracle without question. We simply allow the blessed truth to stand clearly and simply.

B. Real because Jesus says, “poured out”. It is a real act, not a picture drawn to represent what Jesus is doing. When he says IS that proves this is not a picture, it is not a representation of his body or blood.

1. The words, “poured out” show us that Jesus is giving us his own, true body and body, given and poured out for the forgiveness of our sins.

2. Since the acts of both giving and pouring out are real, so also Jesus body and blood are real in the sacrament. Yes, the hymn writer is correct in saying that Christ’s body is at “once in many places.” And why does that truth cause some to stagger in doubt or even unbelief? If we allow our reason, tainted by sin, to lord it over our Lord that is where the problem arises. But when we allow Jesus’ plain, simple words to stand, because he is the eternal Son of God, and accept that he can do anything,

then we put simple, child-like faith in his words and let the forgiveness of our sins rest with our God alone.

Application: What does the little word IS mean for you? It means that as often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you are receiving our Savior's body and blood. Each time you receive it, he is coming to you in the sacrament through his word and the earthly elements. And the Word IS assures you, no matter how horrible your sins have been, no matter how much you have grieved another person, no matter how unfaithful you have been before our Lord at some time in your life, your forgiveness before God is certain, because in the sacrament your crucified Savior comes to you to declare again and again, you are forgiven. I forgive your wickedness and remember your sins no more.

Transition: Always remember, the importance of this sacrament lies in the act of our Savior to forgive us. In that pronouncement, our Lord Jesus shows us the purpose of the sacrament.

II. That declares the Purpose of the Sacrament

A. Jesus says, “For the forgiveness of sins.

1. Remember what forgiveness means for you, for every believer.
2. Recall the parable of the Prodigal Son; He deserved nothing. He did not even deserve to be taken on as a hired hand. He deserved only rejection. But what did he receive? Full forgiveness and full acceptance.

B. By implication, peace with God

1. The Prodigal Son was at peace with his father. Nothing stood between them. But remember the other son, brother to the runaway. He had nothing but contempt for his brother who had run away. There was no peace between them.
2. The runaway son and his father were at peace because of the free forgiveness given by the father. That is what it means to be at peace with God. We can sometimes be in the habit of going back to our sins and remembering the terrible things we have done. Our God forgives us for Jesus' sake and does not Remember

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those things because Jesus paid for them with his blood. And this is why we are not only at peace with God, we are at peace with each other, because my sins against others are paid for, and my fellow Christians know this, for each of them also has been forgiven a burden of debt that Jesus alone has paid for.

C. By extension, eternal life

1. Since no sin stands between us and our God, nothing stands between us and eternal life.

2. each time we receive the sacrament, we need to see with faith's foreseeing eye, the peace we have with our God and the eternal life he promises to those who trust him for every need both physical and spiritual.

Application: This is why on our death bed, we want to receive the sacrament, not because our sins are not paid for, but because we want the assurance that our sins are paid for. We want to hear our Lord Jesus say once again, before we die, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Those words, for every Christian mean peace with God, no debt, no guilt, no sorrow, only peace with the faith and knowledge that God accepts me because Jesus died to pay for them, and he gives me his body and blood to assure me he really did die. How could our Savior in all sincerity give us his body and blood if they did not mean that our sins are paid for?

III. That declares the personal nature of this gift

A. The words "my body,...my blood" and "for you" speak personally to us.

1. They mean each believer counts as far as God is concerned. The sacrament of Holy Communion is NOT a parable meant to picture what Jesus did for us. IT IS what Jesus gives us personally.

2. His body and blood are personal. His words, "for you" are personal.

B. Jesus does not say his action merely has meaning. No, his

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action does something very important for us. In the O.T. God said the Passover had meaning for his people. They were to celebrate something that happened in the past so as to look ahead to the future action of our Savior's redemption for our sins.

1. But in the sacrament Jesus says, "This IS my body and blood for you. This is completed action for you.

2. When an action is completed there is nothing more to say. The meaning of a completed action, for instance, of baking bread, is complete when the loaf is baked and ready to be eaten.

3. In the same way when Jesus suffered and died, when our sins were paid for there was nothing left to do. Our sins are paid for and there is nothing Satan or any of our enemies can do to change it.

Holy Communion assures us that Jesus died and rose for each of us personally. 'For you' means for you personally. It means for you, because by his death and resurrection Jesus makes you his child. So in the hour of communion, think of your personal relationship with Jesus and how he was thinking of you as he shed his blood, as he gave his body to crucifixion. In the hour of communion, think of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. These are your possessions from Jesus, through his last will and testament, in the hour of communion. Amen.